



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

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For Immediate Release

July 26, 2007

NEWS RELEASE

Dan Whiting (202) 224-8078

Sid Smith (208) 342-7985

SENATE APPROVES HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS

Craig applauds border security, firefighter assistance, and passport processing provisions

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Senate approved the Fiscal Year 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations bill tonight. The bill is the first FY2008 appropriations bill approved by the Senate.

Idaho Senator Larry Craig, a member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, applauded the border security provisions and pressed for comprehensive immigration reform during a speech on the Senate floor, **“While we debate border security -- and while we are all for it, and while I have been aggressive in moving legislation with Senator Byrd, starting 2 years ago, to tighten our borders -- always in my mind tied to that was reform of the guest worker program and getting a workforce for American agriculture that was legal, that was transparent, that came and worked and went home. But we can't do that. We would not do it. We refuse to do it because of grounds of political intimidation. The Senator from California and I will ask this Senate to vote time and time again and either say you are for American agriculture or you are against it.”**

The Senate adopted an amendment to include the \$3 billion in border security provisions that were part of the Senate's comprehensive immigration reform bill debated earlier this year. Highlights include:

- 23,000 Border Patrol agents hired, trained, and reporting for duty;
- 4 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and 105 ground-based radar and camera towers;
- 300 miles of vehicle barriers and 700 miles of border fencing;
- 45,000 detention beds;
- Require mandatory detention of aliens who overstay their visa by 60 days;
- Reimburse local governments that choose to cooperate with ICE in enforcing the immigration laws.

Also included in the bill is \$700 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants. These grants have been a tremendous asset to local firefighters in Idaho and around the country, many of whom are volunteers, to purchase needed equipment. Over the past three years, Idaho firefighters have received 112 awards for a total of \$12,292,640.

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Finally, as many Idahoans have experienced, passport processing has been delayed by weeks because of the new requirements for crossing via air into the United States from Canada or Mexico. This bill delays the implementation of passport requirements for land/sea crossing from Canada or Mexico from January 1, 2008 until June 1, 2009 or until 3 months after certifying the existing requirements are met. Craig pointed out, **“Many Americans have had their foreign trips delayed or cancelled because of the backlog in approving passports. While my office helps as many Idahoans as we can obtain their passports, that’s not a permanent solution. This provision works to ensure that Americans will be able to receive their passports in a timely manner when the new requirements take effect.”**

The bill now goes to a conference committee to work out differences between it and the House version of the bill.